

BALD EAGLE
(*HALIAEETUS LEUCOCEPHALUS*)

Navajo/Federal Statuses: NESL G2 / delisted 9 JUL 2007 (72FR:37345), except perhaps for Sonoran population in AZ; BGEPA, with revised definition of ‘disturb’ (72FR:31131); MBTA.

Distribution: Breed across North America, from the Gulf of Mexico to the Arctic; most nesting in the Southwest is limited to the Salt, Verde, Animas, and Gila Rivers. There are few nesting records on Navajo Nation; and migrants use various lakes, including (but not limited to): Wheatfields, Tsaille, Many Farms, Morgan, Red and Black Lakes, and various lakes in the Chuska Mountains. Wintering eagles occur along the San Juan and Colorado Rivers.

Habitat: Typically nest within trees in forested areas, especially mature and old-growth stands, adjacent (usually <2 km) to large bodies of water with suitable forage of waterfowl and fish; rarely uses cliff face adjacent to large body of water. Winter roost in large trees in forests, river bottoms, or near canyon rims, usually within a few miles of ponds, lakes and rivers with adequate prey. Ponds and lakes are used until completely iced-over and prey availability is reduced.

Similar Species: Immature Golden Eagle resembles immature Bald, but has white restricted to base of tail and primary feathers.

Phenology:

- e.FEB-m.MAR: occupation of breeding area, nest-building, courtship and egg-laying
- e.MAR-l.APR: incubation (35 days)
 - e.JUN-l.JUL: nestling period (8-14 weeks)
 - e.AUG-l.SEP: fledgling, independence of young (4-10 weeks, variable)
- e.OCT-m.DEC: fall migration
 - e.DEC-l.FEB: peak wintering population
- m.JAN-m.APR: spring migration

Survey Method: ≥1 pedestrian or aerial survey with high-power optics in suitable habitat during 1 FEB-15 JUN for nesting eagles; 1 DEC-31 MAR, examining likely perch sites and foraging areas for migrating/wintering eagles.

Avoidance: For wintering eagles, no activity during 15 OCT-15 APR within 0.8 km (½ mi) of roost/perch sites or lakes/streams used for foraging; no tree removal in known roosting habitat. For nesting eagles, use ‘[Golden and Bald Eagle Nest Protection Policy](#)’: for active nests during 15 JAN-15 JUL, no brief activity within 600 m, no light activity within 800 m, no heavy activity within 1 km, and no loud activity within 1.2 km; no infrequent-use structures within 800 m, and no daily-use structures with 1 km of any nest, year-round.

References:

- Buehler, D.A. 2000. Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). In The Birds of North America, No.506 (A.Poole and F.Gill, eds.). The Birds of North America, Inc., Philadelphia, PA. (description p.2)
- Grubb, T.G. and C.E. Kennedy. 1982. Bald Eagle winter habitat on southwestern national forests. Research Paper RM-237. USDA Forest Service, Fort Collins, CO.
- Navajo Nation Dept. of Fish & Wildlife. 2008. [Golden and Bald Eagle Nest Protection Policy](#). Unpub.
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 1982. Bald Eagle recovery plan (southwestern population). U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Albuquerque, NM.